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ABSTRACT

This paper reports the development and dissemination of a training program for supervisors that taught them skills of classroom observation and techniques for holding conferences with teachers. The program also served the purpose of providing a vehicle for gaining the support of supervisors and administrators in projects that had teachers for a target population. (Author/MLF)

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SUPERVISORY AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL AS INTERMEDIARIES

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March 20, 1978

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SUPERVISORY AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL AS INTERMEDIARIES

A Brief History of the Development of the Program

In the early 1960's, Cogan and his associates were formulating the basic notions of "clinical supervision" at Harvard/Lexington. At Stanford, experiments were underway with "microteaching" which used powerful feedback techniques to improve the performance of teachers. A few years later the development of "minicourses" at the Far West Laboratory used microteaching as the practice component of self-instructional packages for inservice teachers.

Early versions of the program "Classroom Observations and Conferences with Teachers," were the result of an attempt to use the minicourse approach to train teachers to be clinical supervisors of beginning teachers by becoming skillful in the use of feedback. It is interesting to note that the program has not survived as a self-instructional minicourse but instead has been disseminated largely through workshops using printed materials as a supplement. The techniques appear to be better understood in an interactive situation, especially where realistic practice can be provided.

In 1970, Acheson and Hansen undertook the development of the minicourse on clinical supervision as a subcontract with the Far West Laboratory. A participants' manual was produced along with audio and video recordings. Some field testing was completed using these materials in a self-instructional mode. Yarham reported a number of significant gains on the part of teachers who participated in the field trial.

The prototype minicourse did not fit in well with the interests of the Laboratory at the time it was completed, hence permission was granted to take the product to the Association of California School Administrators who published the printed materials and used them in conjunction with workshops for administrators for several years. Portions of the material have also been distributed by the National Academy of School Executives in connection with workshops sponsored by them in other states. The Confederation of Oregon School Administrators has also used the material in their inservice offerings. Other agencies which have made use of the materials and training are the Nevada Association of School Adminstrators, the Nebraska Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the Florida State University Teacher Education Projects, and the Teacher Corps. Adaptation of the materials has also been made for application to military training programs.

An early version of the material was aimed at peer evaluation or colleague supervision. In this form it was used with several groups of teachers in inservice settings with instruction conducted in school sites. The courses were sponsored by the school districts. Feedback from the participants was used in revising the written materials and the instructional procedures.

A major task which followed these early pilot tests was to refine the many objectives of the material into a few succinct and explicit techniques on which participants could focus their attention. Meredith Gall, who at that time was with the Far West Laboratory, was of great assistance in accomplishing this task.

Modifying the Objectives

Sound principles of materials development require that goals be refined into objectives at the outset and that the target audience be clearly identified along with any foreseeable constraints on the use of the product. Things did not work out in that order for us in the development of our product - which may happen more often in the real world than the textbooks would lead you to believe. We began with a target audience of teachers and student teachers, moved through colleague supervision, and ended up with line administrators. Our objectives began with preservice teacher training and ended with inservice teacher evaluation.

Several doctoral studies conducted during the development period influenced the shape of the final product.

Terrance Thomas' study (1969) focused on two questions: 1. Does an elementary school principal change his behavior in working with his staff as a result of a five day interpersonal relations laboratory experience? and 2. Does the social-emotional climate of an elementary school change subsequent to the principal's participation in this laboratory? The laboratory evaluated was held at Pacific University, Forest Grove, Oregon in June of 1968. Follow up data concerning changes in the principal's relationship with teachers were gathered five months later. The results indicated that the lab did change important aspects of the principal's behavior in dealing with his staff. In particular, principals who participated in the lab made significantly more frequent use of collaborative decision making in the area of deciding how teachers should be supervised. Such changes in the principal's behavior were reflected in increased morale among the staff.

In a 1971 study Peter Titze took a look at how the match of personalities between student teachers and their supervisory teachers affected the student teachers' evaluations. Titze wondered if the quality of the student teaching experience could be improved by pairing student teachers and supervisory teachers on the basis of complementary personalities, as measured by the California Psychological Inventory. The results of the study, however, did not encourage matching of student teachers with supervising teachers on this basis. Interaction between student teacher personality traits did not produce significant differences among student teacher evaluation scores.

Michael Carl's work (1972) was concerned with training student teachers to supervise themselves through self-observation of videotape recordings. Using an observational method developed by Theodore Parsons, GSA: Guided Self-Analysis System for Professional Development, the student teachers learned to analyze their own teaching, as recorded on videotape, with a high degree of accuracy. The student teachers were found to record faithfully both positive and negative aspects of their teaching. Carl concluded that self-observation and data collection from videotape recording could provide a new format for teacher preparation.

In another 1972 investigation, Wesley Tolliver sought to determine whether specially trained supervisory teachers related differently to their student teachers in conference than did untrained supervisors. Specifically, Tolliver asked, did supervisors who were instructed in

the use of SOAI: Systematic and Objective Analysis of Instruction (a set of procedures developed in large part by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory) exhibit indirect verbal behavior more frequently during supervisory conferences than supervisors who had not received SOAI training? Tolliver defined "indirectness" as statements indicating praise, acceptance and use of the supervisee's ideas, and asking for information, opinions and suggestions. To measure indirectness Tolliver analyzed cassette recordings of actual supervisory significant differences between trained and untrained supervisors in their verbal interaction pattersn.

Colin Yarham's dissertation (1972) found that supervisors could improve their observational and conference skills by taking a self-instructional course. The skills of supervisors participating in the study were analyzed on the basis of audio-tape recording of supervisory conferences, both before and after taking the course, as well as on the basis of feedback from the teachers concerned. On almost all measures of supervisor effectiveness, supervisors who participated in the course showed significant gains.

The main focus of Gary Martin's 1975 study was the examination of attitudes of teachers and administrators who were trained in and who used systematic observation techniques (SOT) in their classroom observations. The investigation revealed that teachers who were supervised with SOT believed their evaluation to have been more helpful and were more inclined to accept evaluation as a basis for promotion and tenure decisions than were teachers who had

not experienced SOT. Administrators who were trained in SOT expressed an even stronger endorsement of evaluation as a means of improving instructional effectiveness and as a basis for promotion and tenure decisions than did teachers. Educators who saw their previous classroom observations as being helpful and who were not anxious about evaluation showed a higher regard for the potential of evaluation than did those who were anxious and skeptical about the value of past evaluations. Finally, Martin concluded, elementary educators, both teachers and administrators, expressed more favorable attitudes towards evaluation than secondary educators.

In his 1976 study James Shinn asked two basic questions: 1. Did elementary principals who had attended Classroom Observation and Conference Workshops sponsored by the Association of California School Administrators use techniques from these workshops more often than principals who had not attended such workshops? and 2. How did the principal's training in classroom observation techniques affect the attitude of his teachers toward these techniques? Shinn found that, in answer to question 1, principals who attended the workshops did use the techniques more often then principals who didn't attends. With regard to teacher attitudes, Shinn reported two findings: 1. teachers of the trained principals generally wanted to have each technique used more frequently then did teachers of non-trained principals; 2. Both sets of teachers wanted to have the techniques used more frequently than they perceived their principals to be using them.

Some Conclusions and Generalizations

We have drawn a number of conclusions about the processes of research adaptation from our experience with this particular product. Some of the conclusions are generalizable and have been corroborated by the experience of others, c.f., The Five Dimensions of Demonstration. Others are supported by empirical evidence collected in field tests. Some are perhaps unique to our particular method of operation.

One of the unusual aspects of our project was that it employed what may be called the "Orville and Wilbur" approach, i.e., just two people working in their own barn. Many R & D projects are conducted by larger organizations using the skills of specialists and the facilities of specialized buildings. Another unusual feature was that one of the two developers moved to Brazil in the midst of the project, hence much of the planning and writing was done by way of tape recordings sent through the international mail. We feel that there are advantages to a small organization of two individuals where they are both familiar with their topics and can divide the tasks gracefully even over large geographical distances.

A generalization which is substantiated by a number of studies including the Rand studies of educational interventions is that innovators should have five or more years of successful experience working with their innovation if they expect educators to accept it. Both developers had worked with our system for more than ten years. We found that others who disseminated it found less acceptance as the result of their lack of experience.

The circumstance which brings this development project into the arena of Teacher Corps Research Adaptation projects is that both of the developers became directors of Teacher Corps projects at their universities. At Florida State the product was one of several which were made available to the clients of the project. At Oregon, the product found its way into the project less directly. The thrust of the project was to find field-validated products that would help administrators and teachers cope with a state mandate to implement competency-based high school graduation requirements (including writing course goals, minimum competencies, doing program assessment, and using diagnostic/prescriptive teaching techniques). We found that educators were not anxiously awaiting packaged training in these topics; we were also suprised to learn how few packaged programs were available which had been validated through systematic field testing. As an alternative to delivering inservice programs to meet needs we had identified, we developed a system that was more responsive to the needs that our clients identified. Under these conditions, the need by administrators for help with techniques of teacher evaluation was expressed, and the program which has been described came into use.

There is a parallel between what took place in the politics of the project and something that Carl Rogers points out in a recent book. He was not concerned about politics and power when he first introduced his client-centered approach to counseling, yet he has found over the years that they are connected; a client-centered strategy is a potent political tool. A Teacher Corps project is

unavoidably concerned with politics and power as it deals with a school bureaucracy, and it turns out that the politics of responding to the clients' felt needs is more advantageous than identifying those needs yourself and attempting to supply ready made solutions.

Now it helps to be able to respond to a client's expressed needs with a program you have been working on for ten years. Some developers and consultants are able to convince their clients that what they need is what the consultant has, regardless of the situation - like the salesman with a truckload of umbrellas who persuades you that your greatest fear is rain.

Combining two generalizations that have been drawn thus far leads to a third conclusion. If it is true that innovators need five or more years of experience with their innovation to be effective and if it is also true that the need for the innovation must exist in the minds of the client or ultimate consumer, then either there will be a substantial time lag in responding to a need or innovators must be able to predict future needs. What is advocated here is a combination of these two options, predicting future needs and responding to current needs. The compromise is a form of research adaptation.

For purposes of illustration let us recast the case study which has been described:

Given: A need exists for teachers and administrators to be more accountable. In many states this is currently taking the form of a demand by the public or by legislatures for demonstrated competence on the part of students before diplomas are granted. One might design materials and training to help teachers cope with the demand, except that the teachers don't yet recognize the need.

Another need exists which is already being felt by administrators, the need for specific techniques and skills for evaluating teachers and helping them to improve their competence. (Mandates from state boards or legislatures in relation to teacher competence tend to precede those on student competence by about five years).

Hence, a research adaptor or an educational developer or an astute project director might recognize the wisdom of intervening in target schools using a strategy which includes working with administrators as intermediares using a well-developed program which can be adapted to the current needs of administrators rather than to aim directly at teacners, even if they are the ultimate target.

This kind of strategy implies a flexibility and adaptability which is not widespread among people who do serious and systematic educational research. They are not so interested in shooting at moving targets or shifting the focus of their investigations to adapt to changing conditions. The administration of the project is also frustrating, especially if a management by objectives approach is being used.

Another obstacle in the way of employing the serendipitous approach has to do with funding. Projects are often dependent on support from grants. The support is granted on the basis of a proposal which specified certain objectives. A strict constructionist evaluating the progress of a project may fail to see the wisdom and effectiveness inherent in shifting the emphasis or revising the objectives. He/she may fail to recognize that such action is acceptable and often desireable.

Despite the several obstacles which have been mentioned, in the situation which has been described, the use of administrators as intermediares has a number of advantages. Educational developers, e.g., those in R & D centers or regional labs, have long recognized the need for cooperation from school administrators if one is to field test new products or processes in the schools. Cooperation is required from the district level and the building level. If the building administrators are part of the program there is more likelihood of success. If they are actively involved as trainers or co-developers they usually function as advocates for the program rather than as obstacles.

Another advantage in using administrators as intermediaries is that an intervention may impact more teachers through them then would otherwise be possible. A Teacher Corps project is expected to affect the entire faculty of a target school; this is difficult to accomplish with a small project staff. The use of school administrators provides a multiplier effect and often makes it possible to reach teachers who might not otherwise become heavily involved in the activities of a project.

There is another side to the strategy. Granting that it is desireable to involve administrators along with teachers, one must also recognize the you should involve teachers along with administrators. We have conducted training in supervision techniques which was exclusively for administrators. This tends to make teachers suspicious of what is happening. If some teachers are included in the training, they can reassure themselves and others that there is nothing sinister in the new skills that are be-

learned, in fact that they are designed to help teachers.

Thus far in our historical narrative a number of essential factors have been put in place, although not always in the sequence that would be recommended by systematic developers.

Objectives - a clear set of explicit techniques for effective observations and conferences with teachers has been developed.

Needs - a felt need of some urgency on the part of administrators has been identified

Research base - a body of knowledge, validated by experimental studies and field testing has been brought to bear on the identified problem.

Materials - written materials, tapes, and visuals have been developed, revised, and are available.

Target audience - a client group, administrators and supervisory personnel, has been identified and they have indicated their willingness to participate.

However, not all of the variables have been attended to. How the training process will be conducted and what training outcomes will be stressed has yet to be decided. The answers to these questions will depend upon the unique situation. One nearly always has to adapt the training procedures to the local conditions, and the outcomes expected will also vary.

We found that a two day format works best, alternating formal instruction with "hands on" practice (with a one day follow-up several weeks later). However, this much time was not always available, so adjustments were made. The physical environment where the training and practice take place also has a significant effect on how a workshop will be rated by the participants.

Training outcomes may also be modified to meet the requirements of an individual situation. In all cases our trainees developed skills for observing classrooms systematically and for recording useful data. In some cases the emphasis was on data for teacher self-analysis, in others it was on data for evaluation.

It appears that research adaptation is never completed. Each new case requires a new adaptation. However, once the training procedures have been field tested in a variety of settings, the basic features will have more similarities than differences in their various applications.

We were interested in following up the effects of our training of intermediaries on the ultimate population, teachers. (We are also concerned about their impact on students, but have not attempted such a study). James Shinn surveyed a group of teachers whose principals had received training and a group who had not. The teachers with trained principals perceived more use being made by their principals of the techniques advocated in the training. Both groups wanted more than they were getting (the "trained" group even more than the "untrained"). The results of the study are summarized in the profiles of Figure 1.

Some conclusions can be drawn from our experience with one field-validated, research adaptation which spans eight years with origins going back sixteen years.

1. Be sure your adaptation is responding to a recognized need on the part of your clients.
2. Build your adaptation on field-tested, validated products and processes.

Never 1
Seldom 2
Some-times 3
Usually 4
Often 5
1. Meets me prior to a visit.....
2. Finds my objectives.....
3. Finds my expectations of students.....
4. Finds my concerns.....
5. Involves me in choosing methods.....
6. Helps me identify behaviors expected...
7. Suggests observational techniques.....
8. Suggests self supervision techniques...
9. Records systematic data.....
0. Makes verbatim notes.....
1. Writes my questions.....
2. Writes student responses.....
3. Records task analysis.....
4. Charts student responses.....
5. Makes audio recordings.....
6. Charts physical movement of students...
7. Makes video recordings.....
8. Observes specific problem child.....
9. States his/her objective feelings.....
0. Stays for complete activity.....
1. Meets me after each visit.....
2. Gives me direct advice.....
3. Gives me his/her opinions.....
4. Relates my perceptions to data.....
5. Encourages my inferences & opionions...
6. Asks me questions for clarification....
7. Encourages alternative techniques.....
8. Accomodates my priorities.....
9. Listens more than he/she talks.....
0. Acknowledges my comments.....
1. Gives praise & encouragement.....
2. Recommends resources.....
Ideal-Untrained Principal
Ideal-Trained Principal
Actual-Untrained Principal
Actual-Trained Principal

FIGURE 1 Mean Ideal and Actual Responses for each technique: Trained and Untrained Principals

3. Be willing to adapt to the conditions in a given situation.
4. Consider modifying any part of the total package - the objectives, the target audience, the training materials, the training format, the training outcomes.
5. Administrators and supervisory personnel should be considered as potential intermediaries and helpers rather than as obstacles in reaching teachers.
6. Research adaptation does not proceed in orderly linear fashion as one might hope. In general the sequence is: identify problem, select appropriate knowledge or research findings, identify target population, adapt proposed solution, implement, document, assess impact, disseminate results. Our experience indicates considerable shifting of these steps, especially in making modifications in how the problem is described, who is in the target population, and what form the solution will take.

One could be more scientific and rigorous if more of the variables could be controlled. However, those who enjoy research adaptation relish the challenge of the many unpredictable and uncontrollable events. Consider the contrast between the case study which has been described and a researcher working with seeds in a variety of soils. Imagine that the seeds have the capacity to organize themselves, hold meetings, and move the soil from place to place. Some of the seeds elect not to cooperate in the experiment and a few others choose to oppose it actively. Now the scientific experiment is beginning to look more like a school intervention study.

Within an adaptation project there are a wide range of topics which can be the basis for further research. One can experiment with the measurement instruments, testing alternatives or establishing validity and reliability. Alternative training procedures can be devised and compared. Established procedures can be tested on new target populations.

There are a number of experiments which have not been performed yet on our program, although we have been tempted. We have not compared the outcomes of a self-instructional version of the training with the outcomes from a workshop format. We have not adapted the training for industrial or commercial supervisors, another reasonable target audience, although some adaptations have been applied to military training programs. We have not used student achievement as a measure of the impact of changed teacher behavior. The list could easily be extended.

The endless possibilities lead one to another intriguing thought: one could spend an entire career on a series of projects such as these related to a single topic. Indeed, some investigators and developers do spend years on a series of closely related projects. There are advantages. You get to know the field rather well. You can design new experiments rather easily. You get to be recognized as an authority in the field and may attract proteges as students.

There is also something to be said for diversity in one's endeavors. There are many interesting topics and unsolved problems in education which can occupy the research adaptor. Often the sources of funding influence the topics one will choose. This common temptation leads to another observation.

We have been tempted at times to seek funding to expand our capability, for example, to hire a promising graduate student who has impressive skills. There is a danger inherent in this sort of expansion. One soon finds himself scrambling for additional funds in order to keep the staff employed, so one ceases to be an adaptor or developer and becomes a financeer or administrator.

A few corollaries can be stated in relation to the general desireability of using administrators as intermediaries in the practical application of research adaptations. Stated crassly, this is an infiltration strategy. There are others which could be used, for example, you might reach teachers through their professional organizations. You might gain their confidence by working closely with them on their home ground. You might ride on the tail of a state or local mondate - our experience with this is not encouraging.

Any strategy for intervening in school operations has overtones of politics, power, protocol. Many researchers are not constitutionally adjusted to these kinds of considerations. Therefore, working with administrators as intermediaries can provide the researchers or adaptors with reality checks and pragmatic advice about how to get the job done.

One of the characteristics of a research adaptation project is that there is a need for diplomatic and political skills which are not ordinarily needed in laboratory research. Even with the help of intermediaries there is much need for direct contact between project staff and the client group. Furthermore, this contact needs to be of the type which allows interaction between the project member and the clients.

I occasionally receive phone calls from people who have been in workshops in past years who want to discuss an application of what they learned to what they are now doing. This is a rewarding experience, and it would not happen if we had not had the opportunity to interact in a situation where we felt comfortable with each other. To achieve this state requires either careful design of the intervention or the use of consultants who find it easy to be approachable.

In HMS Pinafore, Sir Joseph Porter, First Lord of the Admiralty, gives the advice, "Stick close to your desks and never go to sea and you all may be rulers of the Queen's navy." The advice which seems to evolve from what has been documented by our experience is as follows:

- If you want to reach teachers, design a program for administrators.
- Be willing to change your objectives and your target population.
- Be ready to respond to the clients' felt needs with programs you've been working on for five to ten years.
- Use only field validated materials and procedures, but don't be surprised if they are hard to find.